

Wildlife Restoration/Hunter Education Advisory Team

Advisory 2020-025: Writing a Grant to Support R3 Activities

December 21, 2020



Can WSFR provide examples of new activities that would be eligible under the Modernizing PR Act that may not have been suggested by States?

Discussion: There are general principles that a State fish and wildlife agency can follow to support how potentially new/creative activities would be eligible for funding under an award. The history and strength of the Wildlife Restoration Program is grounded in the WSFR/State partnership which functions best when both parties collaborate on developing eligible projects using guidance, regulations, and standards for grants. The first section of the Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669) outlines a collaborative/cooperative relationship approach between the Department of the Interior and the State fish and wildlife agencies. While the Department standards provide requirements/guidance on eligible activities and allowable costs in State fish and wildlife agency projects, it is impossible to include specific reference to every potential activity, scenario, method, cost, or approach. The creative nature of submitting both conventional and unconventional ideas for grants focus back to the current purpose of the Act, objectives of funding sources, and what the current law allows. Within this framework, the ultimate suitability of a project is anchored to showing details in the approach section that directly support the project's stated objectives that address a need and purpose of the Act.

In December 2019, the Modernizing PR Act added eligible activities for R3 and a definition to the WR Act to support those activities:

16 U.S.C. 669a(3): the term "hunter recruitment and recreational shooter recruitment" means any activity or project to recruit or retain hunters and recreational shooters, including by—

- (A) outreach and communications as a means—*
 - (i) to improve communications with hunters, recreational shooters, and the general public with respect to hunting and recreational shooting opportunities;*
 - (ii) to reduce barriers to participation in these activities;*
 - (iii) to advance the adoption of sound hunting and recreational shooting practices;*
 - (iv) to promote conservation and the responsible use of the wildlife resources of the United States; and*
 - (v) to further safety in hunting and recreational shooting;*
- (B) providing education, mentoring, and field demonstrations;*
- (C) enhancing access for hunting and recreational shooting, including through range construction; and*
- (D) providing education to the public about the role of hunting and recreational shooting in funding wildlife conservation.*

This definition is specific to the objective to recruit and retain hunters and recreational shooters, but activities to achieve that objective may fit into multiple categories, some, but not all of which are suggested in (A) - (D) in the definition. Rather than make efforts to suggest what various activities may be eligible and allowable, this advisory will outline considerations for how you can support how R3 activities being considered will meet the project objectives.

Advisory:

A project statement that is substantial in character and design is fundamental to awarding of funds under the Act, regardless of the subaccount being accessed: e.g.

16 U.S.C. 669c(c) (Basic Hunter Education or R3)

16 U.S.C. 669h-1 (Enhanced Hunter Education/R3)

16 U.S.C. 669c(b) (Traditional Wildlife Restoration)

See [WR Accounts and Subaccounts for all](#)

A project proposed for WSFR funding should demonstrate that it is thoughtfully and strategically planned, well designed, and demonstrates a high probability of being successful. When applying for a WSFR grant, a detailed project statement must be included in the grant application package. It may also be called the project narrative. According to 50 CFR 80.56, a project proposed for WSFR funding must meet the criteria for being substantial in character and design by identifying a **Need** that is relevant to the Act; establishing a **Purpose and Objectives** designed to directly address and resolve the conservation (or other authorized) need; implementing a planned **Approach** by applying accepted principles of fish and wildlife conservation, management, research, or education; and be cost effective in that the **Expected Benefits and Results** are commensurate with the **Cost**. All federally funded projects must adhere to Federal cost principles (2 CFR 200) to ensure project costs are necessary, reasonable, and properly allocated, making costs allowable.

1. Need

In a well-designed project statement, the **Need** will clearly identify the conservation or recreation issue, challenge, problem, and/or an opportunity to be addressed. The need may identify a lack of something such as habitat or facilities, or an opportunity to provide something such as access to wildlife dependent recreation. The need may be in the form of some pending threat to the resource. The need must be relevant to the purpose of the Act or enabling legislation that authorizes the grant program.

A **Need** statement will answer why your agency should address this issue or opportunity and may address your statutory authority and responsibility to do so. A Need statement will provide evidence such as results from surveys, research or other data to demonstrate that the need is real and not perceived. A need statement will articulate the null alternative (the negative result of taking no action).

Once you think you know the need... ask why? For example, if you think the need is to build a boat ramp... then ask why you need to build a boat ramp. Many times, objectives or approaches are incorrectly included as the need. In reality, the need is not to build a boat ramp, but rather for increased access to a body of water.

2. Objectives

A well-designed project statement will include **Objectives** that state the desired outcome of the project, that are specific and quantified. Objectives should be realistic targets or benchmarks that, if achieved, will resolve the need. Objectives should be written in an active tense and use action verbs such as construct, survey, train, research, operate, maintain, repair, conduct, provide, or acquire. WSFR and the TRACS system has adopted the acronym SMART to develop objectives. Objectives should be (SMART) Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound:

S in **SMART** stands for Specific as to who or what. Who or what is the subject? This could be a person, persons, or a thing.

M in **SMART** stands for Measurable. Common measurements in the conservation field include acres, miles of stream, use days, courses, instructors, students, sites, species stocked, or harvest rates, etc.

A in **SMART** stands for Achievable. Evaluate all the necessary resources (money, time, equipment, and labor) that you have available to you to be realistic about what you can accomplish. A smart objective will consider capabilities.

R in **SMART** stands for Relevant. Make sure the objective is directly related to resolving the need. A smart objective will demonstrate that if it is accomplished the need will be resolved.

T in **SMART** stands for Time bound. Establish a deadline. A smart objective will include a time limit and answer “by when” will the result be achieved?

See the [WSFR Standard Project Statement Wiki](#) page for general examples and guidance for Standard Objectives. Please follow the instructions in the program’s Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) when selecting Standard Objectives. We encourage you to work with your WSFR Regional Office if you have questions about using Standard Objectives provided in TRACS.

3. Approach

A well-designed project statement will include an **Approach** that describes the specific conservation actions, methodology, or efforts necessary to accomplish project objectives. The approach details “how” the objectives will be accomplished by describing the actual

work that will be done. This information must demonstrate that the agency will use sound design, appropriate procedures, and accepted fish and wildlife conservation, management, or research principles that meet the criteria of being substantial in character and design. Include the name of the Principal Investigator for research projects and other key project staff. Include essential equipment purchases and specific management actions that will be taken that require compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. Think of the Approach as Actions that need to be initiated to accomplish proposed objectives.

4. Benefits and Results

A well-designed project statement will include **Expected Benefits and Results** that will specify the benefits of completing the project and resolving the need for a variety of individual interests. The expected benefits will answer the question: If successful at resolving the need, what will be the benefit to the: Resource, User, Economy, Society?

5. Budget/Costs

A well-designed project statement will include the **Cost** data. You are required to provide costs by project and subaccount, individual budget categories with additional justification sufficient to show that the project is cost effective, and evidence that costs are necessary and reasonable to achieve project objectives. Cost effectiveness can be evaluated by comparing total project cost with the expected results and benefits for the project. Describe any item that requires the Service's approval and estimate its cost. Examples are pre-award costs and capital expenditures for land, buildings, and equipment.

A well-designed project statement will connect all the dots by following a logical process of identifying the need for the project to establishing the objectives and describing the work to be done in a sound, cost effective manner.

For examples of well-designed project statements visit the WSFR Wiki at:
<https://fawiki.fws.gov/display/WSFR/Standard+Project+Statements>

See the Appendix for some examples for how a grant proposal that WSFR would consider ineligible can be written to be considered eligible.

APPENDIX

A) Examples of State Fish and Wildlife Agency R3 Project Statements

Both grants below describe the use of various R3 activities, but for very different purposes. One could be eligible, the other is not.

Activities – Conducting Human Dimensions Research and Surveys, implementing mentoring program, directed engagement with identified audiences\groups to recruit as hunters, evaluation of methods to continue to improve successful initiatives and disregard ineffective methods.

INELIGIBLE: This grant would NOT be considered eligible as the purpose, need, and objectives are directed to the primary purpose of earning income (§ 80.54 What activities are ineligible for funding? The following activities are ineligible for funding under the Acts, except when necessary to carry out project purposes approved by the Regional Director: (c) Activities conducted for the primary purpose of producing income. The activities listed is reasonable and necessary to achieve this goal and the grant purpose.).

Purpose: Implement a robust program to increase the number of hunting licenses sold and related revenue levels needed for conservation programs statewide.

Need: In the past decade, fulfillment of the State Fish and Wildlife Agency mission and conservation programs has grown in scope and added responsibilities. During the same period costs for personnel, equipment, and other core budget items have increased. However, State revenues have declined as the number of hunters and associated license sales have declined. These changing circumstances result in decreased funding capabilities to meet sometimes even basic levels of support to core programs. Diligent planning and program reviews have identified that these revenue shortfalls will likely continue, even after the Agency institutes consolidation of programs and staffing adjustment toward available funding sources.

Objectives:

- 1) Increase sale of hunting licenses among all current license class of resident and nonresident hunters,
- 2) Expand license types among select age groups and target “special” species hunts to general additional revenue for conservation programs.

Approach: (these would need to have more detail built into them).

- 1) Develop a working group to explore potential strategies to retain, and reactivate small game, big game, waterfowl and upland game bird hunters.
 - i. Develop a communication strategy and identify target audiences.
 - ii. Provide information on additional, easily accessible pheasant hunting opportunities (e.g. maps and informational resources).
- 2) Initiate two human dimensions surveys (of hunters (current and lapsed), and selected target audiences regarding motives, interests, incentives or barriers in participation in these activities.
- 3) Create and awareness of the network of public lands (state and federal) available to interested hunters for access and opportunities to various species of wildlife.
- 4) Create an awareness of shooting ranges available statewide and resources to support target shooting (archery and firearm).
- 5) Develop a detailed database to track interested individuals, evaluate their experiences in various R3 programs, and develop an overall evaluation matrix to R3 programs and the level of success they achieve. Use this data and results to modify our state R3 plan for effective operations to achieve these grant purposes and objectives.
- 6) Maintain or moderately increase hunting participation in urban and suburban areas by increasing opportunity, as measured by an increase in hunting licenses sold to hunters residing in those areas.
- 7) Maintain current big game hunting participation levels in rural communities of Massachusetts.

ELIGIBLE: This grant would be considered eligible as the purpose, need, objectives, and approach all are directed to R3 efforts for hunters and target shooters. The activities listed is reasonable and necessary to achieve this goal and the grant purpose.

Purpose: Implement a comprehensive program to increase awareness of and participation in hunting and recreational shooting activities statewide and engage the public to the conservation and lifestyle benefits to participation in these activities.

NEED: Hunters and shooters have played an integral role in the conservation of wildlife (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1987). The public participate in these activities for a number of personal reasons, such as for food, to be with family, for personal safety. The USFWS National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (1996-2001) have shown steadily declining trends in the participation of hunters. There is a need to sustain and improve the ability of the States to conserve, manage, and sustain wildlife populations and the habitats that support them by reversing the decline in hunting participation. As stated in need statement of the Council for the Advancement of Hunting and Shooting Sports (CAHSS): "Hunters and hunting have been an integral part of wildlife conservation in

America (Geist et al. 2001), and this downward trend could have significant implications on the ability of States to conserve, manage, and sustain wildlife populations, and the habitats that support them.” Lack of time and hunting opportunities is a commonly referenced barrier to increasing the participation of hunters (NHSS Action Plan Threat T11). Unless the decline in hunting participation is reversed, State wildlife agencies will be limited in their ability to conserve, manage and sustain viable wildlife populations.

OBJECTIVES:

- Conduct 2 human dimensions surveys by June 30,2021
- Produce 1 atlas of public hunting areas and shooting facilities by June 30,2021
- Sponsor 6 apprentice mentored hunts by June 30, 2021
- Host 4 field to table skill clinics by June 30,2021
- Train 15 Hunting Mentors by February 1, 2020

APPROACH: (these would need to have more detail built into them).

- 1) Develop a working group to explore potential strategies to retain, and reactivate small game, big game, waterfowl and upland game bird hunters.
 - i. Develop a communication strategy and identify target audiences.
 - ii. Provide information on additional, easily accessible pheasant hunting opportunities (e.g. maps and informational resources).
- 2) Initiate two human dimensions surveys (of hunters (current and lapsed), and selected target audiences regarding motives, interests, incentives or barriers in participation in these activities.
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Useful Life

Not Applicable – No capital improvements over \$10,000 will be made with this project proposal.

Geographic Location

Statewide

Principal Investigator

Not applicable.

Program Income

None anticipated.

Budget Narrative

Funding for this project shall be provided by the Basic Hunter Education program of the Wildlife Restoration Act (subaccount 5221).

Total project cost is estimated at **\$388,000**

Federal Share shall be **\$291,000** (75%)

State Share shall be **\$97,000** (25%). The State Share shall be provided by non-federal funds from donated services of volunteer R3 mentors.

In-Kind Match: **\$97,000** Volunteer services will be valued at the FY 2015 hourly rate of \$24.75 plus fringe (base salary of Wildlife Officer I).

Pre-Award Costs: No pre-award costs are requested for this grant.

B) Example of Grant Purpose and Object – Activities Determined to be Eligible or Ineligible

Both grants describe the use of commercial timber sales as an activity, but for very different purposes. One could be eligible, the other is not.

ACTIVITY: Conducting a commercial timber sale on a State wildlife management area.

INELIGIBLE: This grant would NOT be considered eligible by WSFR under existing Federal laws because the primary purpose of a grant cannot be to generate revenue (see 50 CFR 80.54(c), cited in previous example). Project purposes, objectives, and approach must be related to wildlife restoration, wildlife habitat management, and wildlife habitat conditions.

Purpose: Management of State Wildlife Management Areas - Commercial Timber Sale and Forestry Enhancement and Economic Incentives.

Need: The Fish and Wildlife Department owns over 200,000 acres of State wildlife management areas. These properties are heavily forested and significantly overstocked from a silvicultural standpoint.

Objectives:

- 1) Reduce stocking levels in appropriate stands.
- 2) Commercially harvest 300,000 board feet of timber annually.
- 3) Provide the State revenue for normal operations via commercial timber sales.
- 4) Provide jobs and support the local forest economy in the State.

Approach:

- 1) Foresters will conduct forest inventory on each WMA.
- 2) Agency will develop forest management plans following silvicultural prescriptions.
- 3) Agency will conduct commercial timbers sales (at least 15 annually) to meet harvest objectives and provide revenue.

ELIGIBLE: This grant would be considered eligible as the purpose, need, objectives, and approach all are directed to wildlife habitat management conditions and species restoration. The use of commercial timber sales is a way to achieve a wildlife habitat purpose, not a forestry or revenue generating purpose.

Purpose: Management of State Wildlife Management Areas - Wildlife Habitat Conditions and Management.

Need: The Fish and Wildlife Department owns over 200,000 acres of State wildlife management areas that provides important habitat for over 200 species of wild birds and mammals. These species require various types of habitat from wetlands, grasslands, and various age class of forest lands. Providing a diversity of interspersed and juxtaposition of desired habitat types to one another is an important element in providing suitable and sometimes critical habitat for these species of wildlife.

Objectives:

- 1) Provide critical habitat for migratory birds.
- 2) Provide a mixture of wildlife habitat conditions (young forest, mature forest, mast producing trees), suitable for a wide range of birds and mammals.
- 3) Implement wildlife habitat plans and provide for a suitable amount of forested habitat age classes on each Wildlife Management Area.

Approach:

- 1) Wildlife managers and foresters will conduct species and habitat inventories on each WMA.
- 2) Agency will develop wildlife management plans to enhance conditions for selected species of wildlife, following appropriate wildlife habitat techniques.
- 3) Agency will conduct commercial and non-commercial timbers sales to create young forest habitat on 10% of acreage available (target 500 acres annually) to meet habitat management objectives.
- 4) Agency will conduct prescribed burns on 400 acres of old field, grassland, and other early successional habitat annually.

Contact your Regional WSFR Office for assistance when developing a grant proposal that supports the objectives under a funding source.